

Good morning Madam Chairperson, members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony today, my name is Larry Beagley, and I am an ABATE member from Butte, Montana. I am also a Vietnam veteran with over ten years of active duty service, I requested early retirement so I could return to my home state to raise my son, and enjoy the freedoms we voluntarily fought and bled for. This was during a time when patriotism was not very popular, and often we were castigated, and bore the brunt of many war protestors' anger upon our return to the world. I volunteered to fight for our freedoms overseas, with the understanding that my elected officials would be defending my personal freedoms here at home. Still today, I vote for, and send elected officials to represent me in the state and federal governments that I believe will defend my freedoms, not try to take them away! As an adult American I have the inalienable right to make the choices that are right for myself, that is if we are still to be called the land of the free.

I have been riding motorcycles for over thirty years, all across the U.S., as well as into Mexico, and Canada. All of the places with mandatory helmet laws, the "hands-on" medical personnel, and the police will admit that helmets don't save lives, however, they do increase the probability that any accident will turn you into a quadriplegic, or a paraplegic. Think about it, we are placing what amounts to a five pound bowling ball on top of the spinal column, and then in an accident the forces are multiplied even more when that bowling ball tries to "crack the whip" to separate itself from the rest of your body. After riding even for a few hours with just a "police" style helmet, or a half helmet, on a sunny day they increase the possibility of heat exhaustion dramatically, tire the neck muscles which slows a persons' reactions, and generally causes a drastic loss of concentration. Personally for me, they also cause extreme headaches, and reduce my peripheral vision by fifty to seventy-five percent. Another aspect to passing a mandatory helmet law, will be the loss of revenue caused by all the motorcyclists that tour our state in the summer riding season preferring to ride someplace where the individual is still free to decide for themselves! The only proven method to reduce motorcycle fatalities is to increase motorcycle rider training, and to increase the motorists' motorcycle awareness. Thank you, very much for listening!